POETRY QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

Sitting in an upper room trying to write an editorial because you have done so at the last moment many times before, one wonders why editors are not generally more human and direct, why the editorial chair should so often presuppose a rather pompous discourse on a not particularly interesting subject, when all that is really meant is 'Get cracking and read on'. The editor of this magazine is not the man to wrap his meaning, if any, in a cloud of words. Even Messrs. George Orwell and James Agate will know what is meant.

All the same, a word or two may be allowed to take up the space for the kind of writing for which the magazine exists. There is at present a noticeable interest in international trends where they are not stopped by iron curtains and currency restrictions. A number of little magazines have sprung up which publish in several languages and aim at bringing together writers of several countries. *Centaur* published in Holland is one, *Graal* published from southern Italy another. From America the *Briarcliff Quarterly* prints many translations, and over here *Translation* (London) gives a good selection from many languages. This seems to us all to the good. It is probable that six years of isolation has inclined verse here to a slight attack of ingrowing toe-nails, though most of our best writers are well aware of what is happening in other parts of the world. But to know what is going on abroad may do us all a lot of good. Pursuing this policy ourselves, we continue to include several translations in this issue, and articles on the younger Mexican poets who are not so well known in this country as they deserve to be.

We are glad to announce that Grey Walls Press will be publishing an English edition of *New Directions*, the American anthology of experimental work. *New Road* will be published in America by *New Directions*. Some copies of No. 9 which appeared last Spring in the U.S.A. will be available at this office, and orders and subscriptions for further numbers may be sent here. The article on the new Mexican Poetry by Lloyd Mallan in this issue of POETRY QUARTERLY is reprinted from that number of *New Directions*. Such an exchange of two anthologies devoted to non-commercial writing here and in America we hope may be of use and interest to those men and women of good will scattered over the world who still, in difficult circumstances, are keeping alive a true faith in the value of the world's literature, and particularly poetry, which the journalists do so much to ruin.

WILLIAM MEAD

I Nunc Superbe

O mind who in this journey through yourself
followed the accurate path from sleep to light
powerful and solemn came and went alike
secure in the supremacy you felt
now you have seen the static universe
split into photos you have given ear
to talkative sunsets and high in the air
strangled the minor fables of the earth.
Conqueror of mythic beasts among its bones
the living head of Hydra cannot change
your perfect victory. So forget. Be bold;
inscribe the tablets with the deed and say:
Now I like Heracles have set these stones
marking the certain limits of the world.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Hart Crane

The green-wombed sea proves now a harsher lover
And more acquisitive than her easy sons,
As furtively the crab, her agent, scans
The inventory of heart and brain and liver;

You suffer now (beyond the plunge of diver)
Her deeper perfidies: the warm stream runs
With gifts of boughs and birds, dead Indians
To each fresh voyager; yet still, deceiver,

Her laced white fingers lap a hollow land,
Where with false rhetoric through the hard sky
The bridges leap, twanged by dry-throated wind,

But crowded thick below, with idiot eye
The leaning deadmen strive to pierce the dim
Tunnels and vaults, which agate lamps illume.

RUTHVEN TODD

Thirty-Two

To say that I grow old is not absurd
When I consider how young Marlowe died,
Unripe and puking blood at twenty-nine,
'Cut was the branch' his spirit might have cried,
O cut in quarters was the memorable word,
That was his life, I wish it had been mine.

Do you recall the nineteen year old boy,
Who looked at Africa and took it to his heart?
Can you remember those who died so very young?
Those poets of a war whose broken song
Shewed that the hope they shared was far apart
From all the things which older poets sung?

When I remember Yeats, the old man in his rage,
Reactionary, cantankerous, and bitter as a sloe,
My heart compares the years and thinks again;
O yes, my years may like these minutes go,
I may forget the biting impulse of my pain,
I may go here or there—my words will stain a page.

J. WHITE

Poem

Time is an anarchy of faces
  Words and vague countrysides
Of a memory grown careless: wishes
  and hopes in an apathy of seeds
That flourish in a watered minute,
  due in a dusty hour: and mine
Is the epoch of a moment out of time—
  moon-white Athens and the sorrow within it.

KENNETH GEE

The Bough Breaks

When lawns were wrapped in folds of snow, reflected white
Would glow and tremble on the nursery wall.
Although the tall pines and powdered laurels stood quite still,
We could hear Christmas coming like a storm.

In winter, we skated, cutting lines of our life on ice: how long ago:
They are not even whispering echoes now, the sharp flutes of our crying.
Is it possible the old roads run to home,
Children still gather chestnuts in the park?
The house will be crumbling stone on stone: the bough is breaking.

How bravely, then, the apples swung
When they belled autumn soundlessly in
Over the garden that ripened
And scattered its gifts for us kindly.

Now the bough breaks, the gate clacks and creaks,
And will never quite shut on the time and place,
On the road to the heart. We extend our beggars' hands in a prayer:
O faraway clocks and weeping bells:
There is only a slow and fading music in the ear.

RUDI NASSAUER

Poem

I have often heard an echo in the mountains.
At first I thought it was the sun
rejecting my voice, slinging it
against the walls of rock until it
reached perhaps the seashore;
I thought that seashells were filled
with echoes of lamentations
because they lie still and the sun cannot enter them.

But I was told that the rocks
had kissed my voice, that they sent
like a ball of children my cry to the sea
and that there it smashed against the cliffs
and that seashells lamented, curled by grief, my death.

Because your cry reaches the regions of echoless lands
do not think all echoes die. When you listen
at night for midnight, it is the echo of your cries the bells will ring
When you wake and your children ask for your kisses
it is the echo of blossoms in your garden.
You will not always be heard
and there is no echo without hearing.
So you must listen as well as breathe
until someone has heard you and told death of your coming.

JOHN LARKMAN

Poem

Between the soft cry and the shuttered wall
lies the mother's curse, the parable of hands
and the comfortless sad fruit of dreams.

Between the first step and the sun
stretch the eternities of scorn,
the face that is grasped at
and the sting
in the fallen hand.

Between the first smile and the senseless board
is the wink, the angel and the jew's-harp,
the thigh's cold failing
and the unfeeling cruel mercy of the shut lip.

Between the last word and the lidless eye
lies the bitterness, the fear, the mute prayer;
lies the rattle and the loud cry.

ROBIN FEDDEN

An Undistinguished Coast

The long flow of Time about him
Works like water, steadily
Carves the littoral of feature;
Those who know him well,
Like fishermen a coast familiar,
Note change in banks and shoals that move,
In every gesture the action of the tides.
The first storm, years ago, did damage,
Blocked the channels, undermined a lip,
And equinoctial gales have left a stammer.
Where the salt current nags the shore,
The rocks are frayed, the glance unfocussed;
The slipping tide licks at a razor edge
And the whole beach is raw;
There are things he dare not think of.
In the still creek the oil that kills the gulls
Thickens on rotting baulks
And water in the deep holes
Whorls the limestone: underneath the eyes
The pouches grow; and the bright fish have gone.
You need no chart to read this story;
Forty years are written here,
A common undistinguished shore.

Distances

Sprinkled so with random care
In astronomics' sore eternity
These stars are distance longer than our lives,
This darkness more than we can bear.
Yet glib geometry will link
The points that catch at mortal breath,
And ease the frightened eyes;
We plot our Euclid in the sky
And span all time with spider lines—
Centaur, Virgin, and the Scales.

Thus man-made polygons
Rope in the far uncertain speck
And blackness, yawning round a name,
Acquires some kind relationship.

Flesh, too, to flesh is fairly spanned,
A line we all can draw.
But heart to heart is a wider gap
The blood's construction cannot bridge.
Through the taut night we fall and are not stars;
No theorem joins our solitudes,
No mathematic solves this singleness.

A Moment Passes

On sand like the seed of men,
On a fine patient beach, waves spill
And wave by wave runs. Now my eyes
Grated by the shore turn skyward
To the headland: one wing over sea
And one wing over the upright land
In middle air wanders, slips on the wind,
A large gull. And the sun shines.

My footprints crumble and are gone; the sand,
That multitude, is modified, and every wave
Reforms the obvious slope. I shall not see
The drifting bird again; no poise, thank God,
Is permanent on any shore.
My hunger, all of me, wanes with the month
And will not look so sharply at your heart
When moment, bird, and tide, have changed.

WALFORD MORGAN

Dialectic

Stranded whales in a white silence
The silver myths that are never told
Set their guard upon tranquillity
And vary our language through
All the dialects of love

Appear rarely before the footlights
Of the tongue infirm with secrets
And the chasubles of sunlight
Are betrayed like lovers
Into secret marriages

Beneath their winged footsteps
Listen then like caryatids
To the tide's antiphonal secrets
And the crimson ink that drips
From the covered sun

Break open with a finger-bone
The whole cosmogony
For before me as I turn my eyes
There lies a bunch of meadow-saffron
Imbricated with postmarks

And all these brittle sanctities
That the wind puts out of commission
Are but a vain theology
And will release a train-load
Of sighs sooner than our poetry
When time is forgotten

HERBERT CORBY

Lincoln: Odour of Sanctity

A stiff climb through the city to the gaol:
  and surging upwards from the eroded gate
the cathedral strikes you like a ship in sail.
  The new town is red brick, expects no fate,
with only token architecture, most
  houses like headaches with their foreheads low.
Above, the antique beauty stains a ghost
  on arch and buttress, the court where plane-trees grow.
The smell, here in the close, reads through no sense,
  and mind receives no signals, but kindles a sweet
presence of dead and arid reverence:
  and like a carol-singing down the street
chime the footfalls of the Good, and nought appals
  the thin alpaca rustle of their souls.

The Haunted

They walk like humans where they used to walk,
  satinned in silence now, and hymns above
their long beds stir them cruelly as they talk
  in undertones of glory and of love.
Shoulder deters no wind, no shadow slips
  like music through the crevices of wood:
no kiss kindles the eyes or rubs the lips
  in ceremonious halls of solitude.
And yet they know stark clarions of terror,
  rampant as angels, through their boneless shame,
as, when some human thing slides out of light,
  haunted, they shrivel like feathers tongued by flame,
and shrouded in yielding corners, curse the horror
  and wail, and dread their human-haunted night!

DEREK STANFORD

Haunted Summer

Ombre vous rampez près de moi.—Guillaume Apollinaire

Who is it rides with me
down these sun-petalled lanes?
Who is it paces beside me
shoulder to shoulder—
invisible understanding
shorn of a tongue?

We pass the fields mosaiced with marguerites;
we feel the sea-wind warm with salt and honey
lurching across from the shore like a man in his sleep:
we watch the buttercups burn in their golden braziers.

And all the villages are over-run
with white brigades of summer. Armies of blossom
with camouflaged green ladders stormed the walls,
while the houses are hung with the flags of trailing flowers;
and this invasion marks a festival
for everyone save I and my dumb companion.

The streets go by;
laburnums lean their banners
from garden fences, tarred or white and cool,
half-folded in cathedrals of the evening;
and the mauve lilac mists its face with tears.

The air is ether-sweet with memory;
and rich with hawthorn and the dung of cows
the closing day rocks gently in its cradle
high on the swaying bough of the fading sky.

Passing a broken gate
to a gorse-bright glade,
where the slowly heaving shadows take deeper breaths,
we see the struggling shapes of a boy and a girl
playing the fool and pelting each other with grass.

Do you not recognize—
you with your arm touching mine—
these laughing figures wrestling in the wood
long past the fall of dew and the first star's flicker,
staying to mock at the jilted nightingale?

Colleague of silence,
invisible friend or foe,
you tell me nothing.
Why do you clench your lips?
I cannot see your eyes
but I feel them fixed
in the aching stare of long communication.

Are you my childhood or my early loves,
or the sombre fancy-dress of a thousand pasts?
I cannot guess;
nor know you to disown you,
in whose still presence
I am most alone.

G. A. WAGNER

The Upas Tree

little white flowers bind your head
but because you are not tired and
the sun is not blinding you this morning
you stand unmolested by flies or incense
in the anathema of tulips.
yesterday's dreams increase with the butterflies
that fly from your soul to
make you call out, Alack!
as they stain your purple shadows
beside the voiceless but ornate
monotony of animals you cross your pink
polished eyes. nothing is left to you
but the precious sonorous rhythms of decadence
the threnody of man's bones mouldering
amongst the twilight in
the ever-wet fields.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

African Soldier

Epstein, the sculptor, would love your ugly beauty—
your nose crouching like a brown toad, your great lips
split to the sun over your monolithic teeth
and your orange eyeballs bursting from your head
so readily accepting what is seen:
the grotesque gargoyle of your face
would flower in stone.

Innocent even of this vanity you stand on guard,
solemn as a child with his first syllable and
ignorant of the game and the perilous stakes:
your metaphysics worn as a charm about your throat
brings Ogandi, the great Spirit, to your aid,
and Jesus whom the white man gave obeys
the powerful ju-ju of your cross.

O wonder that you are, you beautiful race,
crossing the troubled valley of white fools
like children shaking with mirth, slaves
of the sun and your native guilelessness.
For sometimes you return and sometimes not,
and sometimes bringing back a stump, are puzzled,
hurt, but have not learned to hate.

You strut: what colonnades will tremble!
Europe turns an old face to the wall,
and the flags flag and the trumpets toot
and Diogenes is an old bore with a tub,
but a leopard who has not heard of Ulysses
treads craftily and the village drums connect
blood and instinct, no interrogation
crosses the strange jungle of your brain
and no inheritance sits heavy on your back.

Those who are powerful are mad and lose
benevolence of your naive gods. Only you
who are simple are loved by the sun
and Ogandi-Christ, lover of children.

C. BUSBY SMITH

Girl With the Gardenias

for JACOB EPSTEIN

Girl with wild hair, wild eyes,
the young moon burns in your breast;
the clinging branches are silent;
the towering trees are still.
Girl with wild hands, wild lips
the white stars gleam in your hair.

The magic trees are still;
silent the grey grass.
Softly the white moon falls
staining the lean, tall stems.
Girl with wild looks, wild limbs,
the blue night throbs in your blood.

Wild hands tremble
in the cold, still air;
the lean crook'd fingers grope
scratching aside the curtain
the listening curtain of shadow.
Girl with green eyes, green hair,
the young moon glows in your breast,
and the clinging branches are silent.

NESSIE DUNSMUIR

Poem

I would have chosen children,
the breathing hearth. And made my own
ritual in winter, birth and bone.
Not this wordy ferment in the fingers,
this sailing hunger capsized in the breast.
I would have chosen children,
and roofed with rose of fire their early east.

JACK LINDSAY

Signs

The wind has tosst his pebble in the pond
and the tree waves her handkerchief.
A bride is hiding in the maybush
but the mirror of silence yields no face
and I look beyond.

Trouble the waters, lily of light. A key
has turned in the quick door of green
and the day's maze encloses.
Sixfoot of bluebell earth, enough,
my shadow has claimed for me.

Fortunate Moment

Now greenly like a ghost of glass
the day on the wavetop sways,
the translucent shadow high as sky
leans to the lane's lap.

What will the dragnet dredge from the depth
after the tugging hush?
crackt skull speaking an oracle
among the leaping fish?
or hole in the empty net and storm
coming up with a rush?

This mated moment is O of birth:
before the wave curls past,
the tree's heart breaking open reveals
the lost statue at last.

JULIAN ORDE

Escape in Running

I ran until I left myself behind me;
I speared my thoughts onto a spire of pain and left them.
Into the cleft of road and hedge I, with the sound of
morning on my face,
Streamed past the finished things and into day.

Five little towns were humming in the valley,
The telegraph trees were warm, and lonely, throbbing;
The road was roughened with unsorted stones.

I was the hollow can for the wash of the air,
No claim nor count but I was the holder and giver;
And I was the pulse of the green-shot world and driven
With the fountains of growth to the split-wide edge of blue,
Hurling my love in a torrent of worthy shapes
And crying the names of the just for the just to hear.

HOWARD SERGEANT

The Sea-Dwellers

Have you not seen them rising from the waves
at midnight, when the gulls are silent and
the sea opens its doors and watery graves;
have you not seen them swirling on the sand
like corybants, their white malignant thighs
whispering from the mirrors of the moon;
whose phosphorescent eyes are never eyes
but knives to turn the flesh and strip the bone?

Or even at noontide when the sun lends
your otherwise grey a gay and yellow light,
have you not felt the twitching of their hands
upon your shoulder, footprints on your heart?

Whatever tides are swung, have you not heard
their voices bubbling through the surfaced word?

DENISE LEVERTOFF

Poem

Some are too much at home in the rôle of wanderer,
watcher, listener; who, by lamplit doors
That open only to another's knock,
commune with shadows, and are happier
with ghosts than living guests in a warm house.
They drift about the darkening city squares,
coats blown in evening winds and fingers feeling
the worn edge of a book, or finding
familiar holes in pockets, thinking: life
has always been a counterfeit, a dream
where gleaming figures danced behind the glass.
Yet as they work, or absently stand at the window,
letting a tap run and plates lie wet
while the bright rain softly shines upon slates,
they feel the whole of life is theirs, the music,
colour and warmth and light; hands held
safe in the hands of love; and trees beside them
dark and gentle, growing as they grow,
a part of the world with fire and house and child.
The undertone of all their solitude
is the unceasing question, 'Who am I?
a shadow's image on the rainy pavement,
walking in wonder past the vivid windows,
a half-contented guest among my ghosts?
Or one who, imagining light, air, sun,
can now take root in life, inherit love?'

WREY GARDINER

World Without End

My world is a world of detonation and silence,
Hunger and death and sometimes the pitiful singing
Between the dark and the sunlight
Under the unprofitable fig tree that bears
Fruit hard as a stone except in the year
When war made us all forgetful of fruit.

My world is a strange distortion of fact,
Primeval slime and sloth of art
Where no man dares become the thing he will
For lack of love and the bitter singing,
The fear of the fool and acknowledged longing
For all our freedoms and the forbidden islands.

So we continue in our inevitable chains waiting
For the mad doctor with the black magic pill
Who will absolve us from the necessity of being,
Deep in the dream of the unnecessary horrible
Newsreel death we still call living
Hoping for love in the heart of this hell.

MICHAEL RIVIERE

Poem

All summer through
The gods of loin and eye
Riotously pursue
The glimpses of her hair and shoulder
In forests from whose startled foliage
Like doves the spiritualities fly.

But when the green
Is scythed away with snow
Only her eyes are seen
And one god stands declared, to ·k us
In this transparency of winter
With neighbourly angels to and fro.

Poem

O slick elusive quarry I once saw
Vanish through every face in one rich thicket
Now at bay—his fierce vigours recoil
Upon the hunter, his zest flares to awe.

I dread some numinous disaster will
Tear me who here have caught but not despatched
One who ran with the feet of primavera,
Bore the elixir in a scent bottle . . .

Long since, by still pools where the moon afloat
Lit the dark forest, passionate Actæan
Burst oak and myrtle boughs, and in that moment
Felt the fanged love catch him by the throat.

ROBERT MARSHALL

The Unknown Lovers

Tested by time to time and falling fruit
by daring singing arrows on their way,
they break the breath of birth's meridian
most commonly to fire blood's urgency.

To race climactic limbs in broken space
reason divines a rancid ecstasy,
urges the schemes of shadows, while the stars
silver the black of splintered fantasy.

Ever the figured sifting of the wind
casts the refining passion to conceive
levels of riddled likeness to the gods
who perfume all regrets that veil the grave.

Only faith festering in pristine dreams
of pilfered present makes their future real.

ARTHUR BOYARS

Chord

Should you float then on strangeness, distant from the settled line,
Or where the sounds denote intention in finality, where *his* last
breath,
Perhaps of Beethoven, perhaps the shadowed deafness that
Was his hearing, where these lead, then are the eyes, lone remnants
Of that curious connection between the heart and hands, made
Dim,—still, on the strings accomplished magic pauses;
But the mind, removed from all the phrase's long conclusiveness,
May wander on, forget accompaniment, and be the woman,
Even the woman of the notes, and, surely there was one
Tending the brow's acceptance of new worlds, turning
The heat of questions too despaired for music, into
This silent scroll, which is your sound.
Or then, the note
Striking your naked breast makes shuddering, gives light
Of sudden vacancy and still tumultuous movement
To your limbs, and from this sound the black engulfs you,
Bears the mingled gold where interwoven sheets of darkness
Are your storm awareness, and still the current passes
And they are live, where the eye is crystal cased in air
At the grey hollow beyond water's margin,
And there these are the separate freedom of your words,
Tempted below as the breath had tempted them,
Figures of Sun, shape of transferred desire
Placed in the river-room inviolate, through an hour of beaten
graving.

NOTE ON SYMBOLISM: ITS ROLE IN METAPHYSICAL THOUGHT

It sometimes happens that one is given the power with which to extract a symbol from the incoherent welter of existence. The origin of this power is mysterious. And to the Reason, equally mysterious, and therefore suspect, is the nature of the satisfaction which such a symbol can afford the mind.

The symbol in question may be as simple as a polished stone, of clearly defined outline and unambiguous significance; and likewise, it may be labyrinthine in its complexity, and subject, even within the limits of a single identity, to constant metamorphosis.

The symbol has subjective objectivity. It may be described as reflection, precipitate, crystallization, image talisman, and so on, according to the disposition of its creator, or of its beholder; but it escapes all final definition.

The function of the symbol being unavoidably associated both with poetry and with the dream, it can never be given *complete* distinction. It may legitimately be defined in terms both of poetry proper and of 'unorganized' dream; yet the essential function of the symbol, considered as an absolute, surpasses that performed by either of these phenomena.

The symbol is a bridge between the subjective reality of personal experience and the objective reality of the Spirit. When poetry or dream can be said to be controlled by a dynamism of spiritual, as distinct from merely somatic or unconscious mental, origin, then this control must be exercised by means of the intervention of the symbol.

To the 'pure' Reason, the Spirit can never be more than an hypothesis; but, at the same time, it transcends the Reason, having often been known to attain a degree of independent consciousness of itself strong enough to enable it to suspend at will, without doubt or retrospection, the rational jurisdiction of the Super-ego.

When Reason banishes the Spirit, as it is apt to do when it confuses spiritual intuition with the blind and wishful suppositions of the physical instincts, or when it supposes its absolute authority to be threatened by forces which it cannot 'understand', Man immediately begins to lose his ancient sense of mission and of purpose on the earth. The increasingly apparent futility of his existence becomes a source of constantly augmented torment to him; and in order to bring the incomprehensible suffering of this existence to the only end that unredeemable futility is fit for, he hastens to prepare a final orgy of destruction for himself and all

his works. For Man cannot endure for long the constant imminence of the aimless Void which is concomitant with denial of the Spirit.

The Spirit can return to life only through the secret channel of our inmost individuality. Each man must undertake alone and in silence the task of creating a new spiritual reality with which to fill the Void forever underlying objective and empirical reality's changing and uncertain surface.

The Void itself cannot be apprehended except by means of a symbolic expression (self-contradictory representation). By realizing such a term of reference we can free ourselves from the terrible non-existence implicit in the negation of the Spirit; for we then become aware of being able to choose between this non-existence and the possibility of a negation of the negation. Thus may the Spirit's awareness of itself and of the predicament which threatens it be revived within us. Not until then will it become possible once more to attribute a tolerable *human* reality to our life on the earth; which still remains, in spite of all the compendious clear-cut explanations of Science and Reason, the most absolutely mysterious and inspiring subject-object for the contemplation of God's Poetic Imagination.

DAVID GASCOYNE

PIERRE JEAN JOUVE

Former Fatherland

Ageless, the chateaus sweep down to the verge of the sea.
Here, in this country of Claude haunted by golden mist,
I hold myself up by the great corinthian columns,
Features distracted by havoc and din of the fray.

Fanfares! Yet in remembrance all is calm,
Horizons of men and gods fraternally blend,
Blue of imagined tears between harbour-quays,
And the spirit bestowing its kiss on the sensual body.

O land of France, have I known you in other epochs?
Have the centuries led me astray, do I see you here
In the time of my exile between two poles of ice?

Or are you no more than an image hastily plucked
In an ancient place whose very trace is lost?

(Translated from the French
by DEREK STANFORD)

LOUIS ARAGON

In the Fourth Summer of Our Apocalypse

In the fourth summer of our apocalypse,
A strange whiteness appears on the horizon.

Does it mean we will come to the end of the eclipse?
Hope palpitates in the straw of prisons.

Do you hear the night shuddering like a door?
This is the dawn which makes the hangman pale.

Unquiet princes return with a strong escort
To their wives to wash their bloodstained clothes.

The empire of fear, their dominion until now,
Give a different course to the torrent of talks.

For the first time, human words divide
The lips of tyrants and do not kill.

Speaking of asylum, they say: 'It's madness!'
Today when a child dies somewhere.

Henceforth they can by cooing love songs
Prove to the universe their great heart is breaking,

The face always reappears, beneath the grime.
The murderers are counted, the register closed

To those who justify crime with crime
Took pleasure in listening to the concert of sobs.

Once we were fodder for their horses;
And, upright in their chariots and dark exploits

Strength being the rule for the mind it outrages,
They would have laughed at the madmen who refused its law.

To change everything in their metaphysic
Simply a show of light was enough;

It was enough to vary the music a little
To change everything in their philosophy.

Bizarre season in a bizarre time
When the wolf wishes to evangelize the forest!

Mournful cushions spilling their stuffing
Opening to all comers their belly with secrets,

We see orators at the crossroads of Europe,
Sweating the despair of a cause that is lost,

Scarecrows dressed in philanthropists' frock-coats
Which make in the early light the gestures of hanged men

The disaster they don't want to believe is upon them.
In the wind they brandish the stump of a sword.

But the crowd about them is a living mirror
In which their image already is headless.

In vain they lie with their immense words
And pretend that dawn is the climax of terror;

In vain they put on the gloves of clemency,
Say that their coming was providential;

In vain they baptize shadows as light,
Lift ignorance to the rank of a virtue,

Force the step of their funeral march on us,
Replace our statues with stranger gods,

Teach being cowards and preaching slavery,
Conquer the air with the smell of the plague,

Condemn men to the brothel, make widows of women,
Dirty and muddle and dishonour all;

In vain they still command their gendarmes;
In vain only sleep sitting on their loot,

They cannot conceal the colour of their tears:
After all, the night must be followed by morning,

The dawn must consume in its coppery hands
These kings of shade and their rotten succentors,

And the burning earth must deliver itself
From false Crusaders, from phantom makers!

They are afraid, they fear all that breathes.
A song by a cradle. A bird in the summer.

At the sound with a beating heart they crouch down:
For them all is ghosts, chains, and haunted houses.

Steps in their sleep seem to bring up the guard . . .
What are they dreaming that makes them turn so?

Their memory's on fire, their souls full of thorns.
In their turn, in their turn, they are being tortured!

Everyone can see the snakes coming forth
From these hell-mouths speaking of white birds.

Everyone can see the martyrs behind them
Making a bloody sign with down-thrust thumbs.

Everyone can see the black awakening of traitors,
When sunlight at last buffets their disarray.

Everyone can see the priest beside them
Tragically holding a cross to be kissed.

Everyone can see the future which bites them.
Everyone can see the wheel turned upon them.

Everyone can see them sentenced to die
And the blood splashing out where the ball goes in.

They wear in their flesh the terrible stigmata
Of what is to be, and they hide them in vain.

And in this wax day with automatons' faces
Already they gather for the Musée Grevin.

(Translated by WILLIAM MEAD)

PAUL ELUARD

Saint-Alban

The water in the mountain meadows
Continues singing softly at our feet
It is cool evening falls and we rejoin
Our eyes upon the path we know by heart

Our young friends are awaiting us
Country living does us good
Our leaves will regain the tree
Our grass will find the night of its growth

This evening there will be laughs some tears
Will mingle with them love will baptise the night
With new names the colour of our bare bodies
Rose will put on her bonnet red

Blanche will lose her bonnet black.

JULES SUPERVIELLE

Suffering Dead Men

Lost among footsteps and the ruins of planets
Carried over the abyss where the sky is swallowed
I hear the breath in me of marching stars
In the depths of a heart alas I know eternal.

I arrive from the Earth with my human load
Of hopes seized by panic and abrupt memories
But what can be done in the open sky with a heart struggling
As beneath the sun and which has not been able to die.

Have you seen my eyes wandering in those parts
Where the far and the near have no shores.
A blind man without staff and without face and without faith
I look for a body, the one I used to have.

Could I but preserve from the avid spaces
My memories prowling about the house
Cherished faces and my poor reason
From which I watched myself as from a terrace.

May I save at least this shifting treasure
Like a long-haired dog beneath the foam of the sea
Holds between its teeth its half-dead whelp . . .
But here advancing is the mist of the abyss.

The universe where I am gives a cruel sigh
And the throat of the deep sky distends,
Since all rejects me here, even the dream,
To what could these landless places consent?

BLAISE CENDRARS

Verses from New-York Easter

Lord, I return worn-out and very sad . . .
My room unfurnished as an empty grave . . .

I am all alone, O Lord, and weak with fever . . .
The sheets on my bed are cold as the cloth of a shroud . . .

My eyes are closed, O Lord, but my teeth still chatter . . .
I am quite alone. I am cold; and I call your name . . .

A hundred-thousand humming-tops turn before me . . .
Or are they women dancing or cellos whirling . . .

O Lord, I think of all my evil hours . . .
Of all my wickedness in alley-ways . . .
My thoughts, O Lord, no longer seek You out.

(Translated from the French
by DEREK STANFORD)

FEYYAZ FERGAR

Poem

Between your eyes and mine
comes sleep
commerce of gifts
and loneliness

Between your hands and mine
exchange of wealth
the firm impressions made by coloured seals

Between my mind and yours
comes this new passion
and this unknown this new this other wisdom

Between your eyes and mine
waves of evasion
and always over hill and dale there's you

(Translated from the French
by DEREK STANFORD)

FRANTIŠEK HALAS

Verses

In spite of seeing
so blind
in spite of hearing
so deaf

In wind a leaf the hope in vain
in love alone in snare a bird
in rose a worm a song in rain
crying in throat blood in the word

In spite of seeing
so blind
in spite of hearing
so deaf

(Translated from the Czech
by KAREL OFFER)

FRANZ WERFEL

Prayer for Speech

Give me not power over language
But give language power over me!
I do not desire with such skilful fingers
To thread out syllables like rounded pebbles;
But let me in a reverence of worship
Encounter you wildly in a thornbush of words,
In the torn and stammering branches
Which burning with your bluish flame
Betray your visionary likeness!

(Translated by WALFORD MORGAN)

THE NEW MEXICAN POETRY

There is a return to Romanticism in the new poetry of Mexico to-day. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the extreme youth of the half dozen or more major poets who began to achieve recognition in 1936—all of them are as yet under or around thirty years of age. Their themes are disillusioned love, the irony of life and death. However, theirs is not a return to old forms, nor even the old romantic Modernism of Ruben Dario and his followers; they do not strain to create 'lyrical beauty', nor do they deal in the familiar trappings of Pan and nymphs and graceful swans. They have created, instead, new forms that depend on the skilful use of language, the subtleties of sound and image. Their work is restrained, reserved to the point where its lyrical qualities are hidden in the poem, are a part of the poem.

Nor does this really new poetry lean too heavily on mysticism and futility, two themes particularly attractive to the earlier lyrical poets of Mexico—and of Latin America as a whole—since such themes lend themselves to all kinds of colourful imagery. They have also renounced the 'modern' and bizarre imagery that has become hackneyed with repetition since it was first innovated successfully by such fine, if slightly earlier, poets as Xavier, Villaurrutia and Salvador Novo. True, there remain scattered traces of the influence of these men among the work of the younger poets, particularly in some of the poems of Ali Chumacero, but they are well absorbed and hardly noticeable. There are traces, too, of the great Spanish moderns, such as Rafael Alberti, Garcia Lorca, the Machados, Jorge Guillen, Pedro Salinas; but all of these have served, in a sense, as masters rather than influences. Proof of this lies in the fact that the younger poets of Mexico are as Mexican as Orozco, or Rufino Tamayo, or Rivera, the painters. When they write of so universal a thing as love, they do it as Mexicans; unlike most other Latin Americans, their sentimentality does not spring alone from emotions inspired by the beloved, but comes, too, from a co-existing realistic evaluation of love, its transitory qualities, its irony of selfishness, its inspiration of self-pity, its ability to give one a purpose in living, and the irony of this, too. Thus their romanticism comes from the way their feelings are affected by what they see realistically; exactly as their great modern compatriot painters, they observe the life around them with their intellect and interpret it with their emotions.

Death has been a popular general theme of Latin America and Spanish poets through the centuries, but these new Mexican poets

do not write of death as something that lives within them daily and haunts their waking hours in all the disguises of living; instead, they write of death as does Octavio Paz in his 'Elegy on a Fallen Comrade', a death which man and the poet himself must inevitably meet, yet he meets it struggling.

The earlier moderns, of whom Villaurrutia and Novo are the best exponents, deal with only the hopelessness of dying. There is a sense of the hopeless in Paz's work, too, but it is of the future and not the present. 'When man finally dies,' he seems to say, 'then all will be futile for him as a person; but what he has done and what all the other dead have done will continue to live in others.' It is a hopelessness with hope; and in his powerful and beautiful and startlingly original long poem, 'Between the Flower and the Stone,' Paz states this theme again and again:

> '*But in the night the water shudders.*
> *A metal sky*
> *oppresses breast and vein*
> *and the horizon trembles in this suffocation*
> *Water shudders black within its shackles,*
> *While man runs his race from death to dream. . . .*
>
> *O love that barely blooms and dies,*
> *does all this sunken silence,*
> *all this feverish quiet,*
> *flow naked in your rigid flame*
> *only to name your death?*
>
> *If I were able,*
> *upon this thirst illumined shore,*
> *to sing to man who inhabits it,*
> *to sing to man annihilated by his own thirst! . . .*
>
> *To man among his fruits and ends.*
> (*The fruits of this earth are the ends of man. . . .*'

Octavio Paz is not a poet of futility as are his immediate forerunners: for one so young, perhaps because of this, he is a violently bitter poet. There is a continual struggle against loneliness in his verse, and he cries out against dying, against the pettiness of man, even as the others before him have accepted it and embraced it. Paz is a revolutionary poet, not so much politically as in the form and content of his verse; he has exploited the possibilities of word-use, done much to make Spanish a more flexible language, in the

same manner as Dylan Thomas has made English so much more flexible. But what is most significant, Paz represents anti-tradition completely. He represents one of the first of the new voices of a truly Mexican culture; he has, of course, even as his colleagues, absorbed the tradition of his predecessors, but he does not like these, he does not like the meek acceptance of fate and futility and mysticism thrust on his people by Spain and the Church; yet these are the only things he knows, so in his work they may be found, but negatively, mingling with his desire for a better reason for living.

Bitterness seems to be a common motivation among all these younger Mexican poets, for Efrain Huerta, a poet of equal importance with Paz, is also 'against'. He, too, has absorbed and is a part of that which he is denying. But here the similarity ends, for Huerta is mainly a poet of disillusioned love. His two published volumes to date bear the titles, *Absolute Love* and *Line of the Dawn.* Although he has written one poem at least, 'Stalingrad is Still Standing,' that seems to contradict the above statement, there are even in this poem lines that reveal his romantic nature:

> '*And thus we watch you, brilliantly erect,*
> *mountain city, child of the river,*
> *daughter of our anguish and faith.*'

Again throughout his love poems runs the theme of death. The theme is handled exactly as Octavio Paz handles it, by refusing to accept it and by contrasting life against it.

> '*Indigo dawn wounding us like the deaths*
> *we die in dream and love, like kisses*
> *killing hope, farewell kisses, flinging*
> *mirrors upon the sea of daylight. . . .*
>
> *But the dawn has wanted to rise from the sweet*
> *hot and delicate throat of a young girl.*
> *Tireless and joyous as chaos, the dawn.*
> *Now we may understand humanity's lament,*
> *now know those sad children*
> *who die from cynicism, forget by weeping. . . .*
>
> *And now:*
> *here the dream is dream alone,*
> *death alone this: dry death.*
> *Death by whatever means you may choose:*

by a carnation crushed beneath your foot,
a kiss softly upon your shoulder,
because some eyes of green shine more than others,

because your hand is a silly hand
incapable of brutal shaking
and the lazy caress and languid . . .
and your soft voice it was
calling me to life.'

Both these poets possess an almost unearthly lyrical sensitivity, a fine ear for assonance and a great inventive talent with words. Their work literally glows with colour, the one fiery, the other cool and refreshing. They are helping to create a new form of lyricism, the kind that arises out of the poem, and not the kind into which the poem is thrust. This is also true in greater or lesser degree of Ali Chumacero, Neftali Beltran, Alberto Quintero Alvarez, Rafael Solana, and Enrique Guerrero.

LLOYD MALLAN

THE MEXICAN POETS: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

OCTAVIA PAZ was born in Mexico in 1914. One of the editors of the late literary review, *Taller*, he is at present on the editorial board of *El Hijo Pródigo*, one of the finest literary magazines in all of Latin America. Published works: *Rádz del Hombre*, Mexico, 1936; *Entre la Piedra y la Flor*, Mexico, 1941; *A la Orilla del Mundo* (collected works, 1935–41), Mexico, 1942. In 1943 he was awarded one of a number of Guggenheim Fellowships set aside for Latin America.

EFRAIN HUERTA was one of the founders of *Taller*, and has been editor-in-chief of *Nuevo Mundo* and editor of *El Popular*. Born in 1914, he has published *Absoluto Amor*, Mexico, 1935; *Línea del Alba*, Mexico, 1936.

ALI CHUMACERO is on the editorial board of *El Hijo Pródigo*. He was born in 1914.

ALBERTO QUINTERO ALVEREZ (born 1914) was one of the editorial board of *Taller*. Published works: *Saludo de Alba*, Mexico, 1936; *Tres Ensayos de Amistad Lírica para Garcilaso* (essays written in collaboration with Rafael Solana and Jaime Torres Bodet), Mexico, 1936; *Nuevos Cantares y otros poemas*, Mexico, 1942.

ENRIQUE GUERRERO was born in Mexico in 1914.

NEFTALI BELTRAN has published *Veintiúm Poemas*, Mexico, 1936; and in 1937 two pamphlets of poetry, the most notable of which is *Canto de Viento*. He was born in 1916.

RAFAEL SOLANA (1915) contributed to *Taller*. Published works: *Ladera*, Mexico, 1934; *Los Sonetos*, Mexico, 1936.

OCTAVIO PAZ

Elegy to a Young Friend, Dead at the Front

I

Comrade, you have died
in the burning labour of the world's birth.

And horribly alive,
these things are flowering from your death:
your look, your uniform of hero-blue,
your surprised expression in the dust,
your hands, without violin or rifle,
so nakedly still, so quiet.

You are dead. Irrevocably you are dead.
Stopped is your voice, your blood in the earth.
You are dead, and I do not forget.

What earth shall blossom that does not lift you high?
What blood shall run that does not have your name?
What voice mature our lips
that will not speak your death, your silence,
the stoppered sorrow of being without you?

And lifting you,
lamenting you,
having your name,
giving voice to your disintegrated body
blood to your broken veins,
lips and liberty to your silence,
these things grow within me,
weep for me and call my name,
furiously lift me:
other bodies and other veins,
other abandoned peasant eyes,
other black, anonymous silences.

II

I remember your voice. The light of the Valley
caressing our temples,
wounding us like swords of splendour,

changing in shadowy lights,
a step of dance, stillness of sculpture
and timid violence of the air
in swirling hair, clouds, torsos, nothing.
Waves of light, so very clear, so empty,
that they burned our thirst, like glass,
engulfing us, voicelessly, pure as fire,
in whorls of resonant whirlwinds.

I remember your voice, your hard expression,
the severe attitude of your hands;
I remember your voice, adversary voice,
your enemy word,
your voice pure with hate,
with tender hate, with fertile hate,
that made the earth burn
and ripen for man in fists like certain fruits,
comrade-fists and fists for combat.
Your heart, your voice, your living fist,
stayed and shattered now by death.

III

Comrade, you have died
in the burning labour of the world's beginning.
You have died when barely
your world, our world, was dawning.
And you carried in your breast, your eyes,
behind the implacable expression of your mouth,
a clear smile, in pure daybreak.

I see you surrounded by bullets,
by rage and marshy hate,
like a tense fallen flash of lightning,
like the bland presumption of water,
prisoner of rocks and blackness.

I imagine you flung in marshes,
fallen forever,
maskless, smiling,
touchless, yet touching now
the hands of all the dead,
the comrade-hands of your dreaming.
You who have died among your own, and for them.

At the Margin of the Sky

Banished, at the margin of the sky,
stretched out and alone, I lie
loosed from the world,
from flesh of the Word,
like fallen fruit,
like coal among the ashes dying.

Remembering not my origin nor form.
The world bodyless
and the earth sterile, knowing
neither memory nor touch.
Alone among your stones I lie, Kingdom
frozen, total night, of stone, not shadow.

Ah, limit of the world,
hopeless region,
who weeps, who calls to me,
there, beyond my dream?
Leave me among the stones, don't touch me,
weak innocent light, vague form.

Ah, final solitude,
who touches, calls to me,
dumb and wordlessly,
soft beating in the centre of this silence,
hoping never for an answer,
like the voice of a river
calling to the infinite plains?

Don't touch me, leave me among the stones,
nascent wounded sound;
stone fallen as I am among the stones.

I Touch You, Frozen River

I

Dense animated nothingness
freezing through our bones
to stretch upon our shoulders,
inhabiting our brain—
monotonous undecipherable drum—
imprisoning our arms,
our thighs with its fever,
its frozen saliva. . . .

O shoreless presence,
gloomy world forboded,
resignation of this touch, these eyes,
this skin upon which hours
travel and devour;
what cold light is this
that sheds its silence
touching things to ice and emptiness?

Is love, then,
a divided terror,
two bodies in embrace
imprisoned by your touchless shadow?

II

Calling you with frigid tongue,
I touch you, frozen fever, warm
body palpable yet unaware of me;
let me have your hot bright dust,
your pulsing persevering flesh,
your forboding skin,
my form remembering.

O touch, let me feel my known forms,
lips like my lips,
nimble mortal buds;
inform me, my senses,
that watchful I may be
of something I must know and must know me,
to grasp what I am and you what you are,
to see me as I am.

Daily light of dawn,
love unnoticed, death
forgotten, brief eternity
of consciousness, the dark
mystery which hands beget in air;
something first to set me free
even while imprisoning me,
to hem me in and hem in all,
something I may touch which touches me.

O give me only touch.
In form, where lives alone my being
and your innocence, is reconciled my thirst.

EFRAIN HUERTA

Poem of Scorn

For Andres Henestrosa

Scorn, so says to you my wearied tenderness, is like
cold brittlĕ glass running redly through my veins

I

I remember when I walked
through a time apart, a dream removed,
a frozen grave and cemetery,
braving the barrenness of ultimate indifference,
I brought you my blood
brittle and minutely maddened
by hunger or in reference to this idea of the heart:
dawn alone and certain truths
corroded with nauseous convention
bring back to me
the sweetest virtues
or beat nocturnally
in the nocturnal river of my skeleton.

Betrayed to hope and youth
and the brief gazelle of tenderness,
I shed a slender soft lament
with neither grace nor feeling;
and this life with beast-like face
in bitter insomnias reeling
barely lent me the anxiety
of agony and crime.

II

But now
sadness has been done;
and gray foam breaks
in high and hollow shadows upon me
in horror of stone church steps where beggars
in the sun abase themselves like dogs;
cities sorrow me
with their bitter convent air
and tragic case of a woman none thinks fair—
tomorrow's dawn
will not erase the sorry fog of the soul's affair
(cowardly moon and blind, against a window, sick and pale),
forever tensed example of absence does not fail.
(Absence is a voice
mildewed on contact with the air.)

(Green water: the anguish intact,
enemy of desire and heaven.
Mist and blood upon the hands:
vain is the light on memory shining,
vain the whining marble beast of doubt.)

III

Of my frozen nights and vegetal noises,
of the woman in silk and the honeyed friend,
of my fine statues
there remains not a breeze
on which to lay my hand
and a little of piety.
Of the blue-burning wine,
barely remains the dreamed-up beauty
and a magical murmur.

Perhaps in you, hell adolescent,
O wickedness,
life might have been a moment,
an enigma.
Perhaps in you, ash of fear and hate,
O rancour . . .
Or in that nostalgia
where love decomposes
some fiery camellia
over an indignant skin.

Small honour, and you, admirable prudence,
and you, also, deserted courtesy;
and you, hope, tenderness,
implacable sadness,
light, caress,
wonderful candour;
juvenile tumultuous river,
pleasure and eager voice . . .

And myself I question closing
the door to worry,
breathlessly giving myself
to the endless day of Scorn.

IV

Metallic truth and night and mystery
with the high dream, the sword unsheathed
at the foot of the unattainable,
as though a quarrelsome virtue awakens in blood
to bring a blush to cheeks, discovering
the good in mud and goodness shattered.
Lover beds become silent: a wounded pillow,
sheets or knives, a musty embrace.
And you, sorrowing friend, and you, woman,
O flowing blushing glass must you exist
beneath the brittle sky of life,
in your spikenard kingdom of desire?

Gray doves flutter on the shore
of full love, and against life-giving air
flies passion gray, flies silence
shattered discordantly to musical splinters.

(Melancholy and destruction, sweat of fever,
bitterness of abyss: this is love.)

A corn-silk tassel from a sobbing man's expression
Flowering, insensible, undernourished tassel,
smooth, serene, fragile tassel, a perfect truth: Scorn.

V

From the splendid summer's morning of the soul's essence
bloomed a frosty flower;
and out of this frosty flower came a sentiment;
and out of the sentiment, misfortune came, black breed of
anxiety, gray apple, potency of hate;
but a hate like a tame river, a traitor, with green foam-animals
crawling over its body.
Neither vulgar hate nor cold Scorn for sale,
but a flower, a flower that my friend, my wife and brother never
saw;
a delicate flower, soft to touch and words, soft to senses, to the
weak and moribund senses.
A flower that unfolded before my eyes.

Then let me look to the miracle.
I said that love's sweetest hour had come,
that the heart, at last, was earth and water, corn and carnation;
that the heart came toward me,
became my imperfect lament,
my Scorn.

VI

And now my speech has ended:
this flower is a temple
a bright signal and a goodbye handshake.
Because truth is the only thing in the blood,
truth blindly and truth brightly,
the robust truth of true men.

Beside the flower of hate and love
blooms this tender flower of anxiety and Scorn.

This Region of Ruin

I

This region of ruin,
camellia fragility,
lets no one ever sob
but quietly in blood
his intimate sorrow;
this small land
of precise half-warmth,
this acid course of agonies
is, in pure words of piety,
the old, exhausted root,
the rotted marrow of the city.

II

And now:
the dream is nothing more,
death no more than dry earth;
death by whatever you may choose—
by a carnation crushed underfoot
by a kiss upon your shoulder
because some green eyes shine more than others,
because your foolish little hand
is incapable of brutality
and inescapable caress, light and languid,
because your shame is goodness,
ignoring grace of passion,
compassion alien to your face:
and because, at last, your watercolour kingdom,
your music and your eyes of ripe grain
do not pertain to this republic of lament,
nor are they meant for this moist hot forest
languishing, rotted by contempt,
nor to this coppery place where
with a June dawn I dreamed of victory—
And this was your soft voice
it seemed, calling me to life.

RAFAEL SOLANA

Two Sonnets

I

As though a net had been woven round the dawn
—each strand a vein—and widely flung
over the sea high and serene of music and the sun
to see it float a moment, then go down.

Then to watch with pain the twilight ebb of tide
leaving hopelessly upon the sand
the shapeless net unguided by a hand
and sadly through its threads and snags abides

Emptiness. But one thing has remained at end of day
filming my sorrowful fishing eyes,
tremulous, alone, pure and crystalline

—As in the empty net a fleck of spray—
a salty drop of bitterness of skies.
Who sows love forever harvests dreams.

II

One night in envelope of purest frost
against my window bloomed a rose of snow
and all that night I watched it grow;
but morning saw it melted to a tear, and lost.

Again, a rose of music to my ear
descended softly as the snow; and then became
but empty shadow with the dawn and pain
filled silence, harsh oblivion and fear.

Finally, to my breast came love, a rose
with roots of joy and joyous laughter's ring;
but when I opened wide my eyes it chose

To die in wasted garden, with other lean
and wasted flowers that feigned illusory Spring.
Who sows love forever harvests dreams.

EDITH SITWELL: HER POETIC WORLD

The two volumes of new poems, *Street Songs* and *Green Song*, which Miss Sitwell published during the late war, have so increased her reputation with the majority of poetry readers, that the time (only a few years back) when a critic of integrity, and a by no means wholly unperceptive student of contemporary trends, could lay it down that she belonged to the history of publicity rather than poetry, seems remote indeed. The re-issue, in *Song of the Cold*, of the bulk of these poems, arranged as a sequence together with some new poems in the same vein, and some earlier ones which the author regards as linked with them in feeling, seems to provide a valid opportunity for a discussion of the characteristics of her work as a whole, and of the genesis and development of the peculiar poetic vision revealed in her later poems.

Miss Sitwell is, indeed, a writer whose stature it is difficult to assess. She is an extreme individualist; but she has always striven to give to her work something of the absolute and impersonal quality of music. Her early poems are open to the charge of eccentricity; but still more to that of being mere decorations in words, technical exercises, without poetic significance in the truest sense. Against her latest poems no such accusation could be levelled, but some may miss in them the note of individual utterance. She seems to be less concerned with this than to distill the basic themes which underlie all great poetry, and reiterating them again and again, to strike from them rich and subtle harmonies.

It is largely true that in these poems we hear, not so much an individual voice, as the undying poetry of the earth itself. In the poem entitled 'An Old Woman' the speaker herself seems half identified with the earth, which the sun shines upon and quickens into life. Here the poet has at last achieved the acceptance of her own feminine nature. She is concerned only to be the vehicle of life and of the poetry of life. The masculine, self-assertive intellect, that which distinguishes Good and Evil, no longer matters to her:

> *And the sun does not care if I live in holiness,*
> *To him, my mortal dress,*
> *Is sacred, part of the earth, a lump of the world—*
> *With my splendours, ores, impurities and harvest,*
> *Over which shines my heart, that ripening sun.*

The poetry of women is often closer to earth, and nearer to home, than that of men. Among the people, women have been, in the

past, not only the chief preservers of traditional wisdom, but of ancient poetry also—ballads, folk-songs, and nursery rhymes. Thus it is that we find the rhythmical structure itself of the verse of more than one woman-poet writing in English standing apart from the main stream of literary influence, and based primarily upon such homely rhymes. This is the case with both Christina Rosetti (from whom Miss Sitwell has learnt much) and Emily Dickinson. Different as they are in other respects, both these poetesses express profound and passionate religious experience in words which owe no small part of their pathos to the suggestion of an inspired nursery jingle which they carry with them.

It is primarily as a woman's work that we must judge Miss Sitwell's poetry. We must also seek to see it against its specifically English background. She has herself spoken of the 'country world' to which her poems belong, and again, of 'the flowering earth and darkness' of her heart. In spite of the deliberate artificiality, the 'Cubist' corelation of natural to artificial objects (the 'chalets of the cloud', 'stalactites of rain', sky like a clown's paper hoop, etc.) of much of her earlier poetry, she nevertheless possesses, in a high degree, a peculiarly feminine and intimate feeling for Nature, a feeling even of identification with it. This has been accentuated by the consciousness of a long family tradition, rooted in the life of a particular locality. This then is the basis of the world of her earlier poetry; and it remains a romantic and largely a child's world. The gardener, the maids, and nursery-tea mingle with figures out of fairy-tales. The most potent literary influence on these early poems is, of course, *Les Illuminations*, crowded as they are with childhood memories, but Miss Sitwell is far more literary and less vital than Rimbaud. The nostalgia of Verlaine's *Fêtes Gallantes* also casts its shadow, and there is an excess of baroque, second-hand ornamentation. The poems of *Façade* and *Bucolic Comedies* are, doubtless, largely technical experiments—by no means universally successful ones. Miss Sitwell had (and still has) a somewhat embarrassing tendency to repeat the same motifs, and almost identical lines and phrases, in different poems. This is, perhaps, particularly open to objection when the poems themselves appear so slight, but the very recurrence itself serves to emphasize the child-like, glittering, innocent quality of the poetry. This manner reaches its furthest point of development in *The Sleeping Beauty*, where the imagery and music of the verse have, when the poem is read as a whole, a hypnotic quality. This work has something of the effect of a child's Christmas tree, beautiful with candles, and gaudily hung about with coloured glass fruit and bells. But it is easy to miss the dark, living foliage

beneath. Already, in these early poems, more elemental feeling is present. The sun, in this child's world, is always treated as an animal or human being, as often as not faintly menacing. The fire likewise is 'furry as a bear' to the girl in 'Dark Song', who cries:

'They thought I sat
Like a household cat;
But through the dark woods rambled I . . .
Oh, if my blood would die!'

Against the glittering sunlit world to which the poems seem to belong, other worlds are set in opposition. There is the world of dust and corruption, and through the shade move dark figures, satyrs and negresses, sometimes innocent enough, sometimes, like 'Black Mrs. Behenoth' in *Façade*, decidedly sinister. The poet is conscious of the omnipresence of the death-feeling in our civilization, and she sums it up in the ghastly vision of *Gold Coast Customs*. This latter poem is, in my opinion, too merely horrible, and insufficiently intellectual, to be altogether effective as a denunciation of the social corruption of our time. More impressive, to my mind, are those poems in which the story retold is allowed, quite spontaneously, to furnish a symbol of disintegration. The speakers in 'The Lament of Edward Blostock' and 'The Little Ghost who Died for Love' are the innocent victims of injustice. The latter, returning in the spring from the infinite cold of the Dead to the world of the living, cries warningly:

'Though cockcrow marches, crying of false dawns,
Shall bury my dark voice, yet still it mourns
Among the ruins,—for it is not I
But this old world, is sick and soon must die.'

In 'The Drum' the haunting of Justice Mompesson's house becomes a portent of its ruin:

In the house of the Justice it must lie
To usher in Eternity.

The house itself becomes a symbol of our world, built upon greed. (Historically, as Miss Sitwell doubtless knows, this Mompesson was notorious among the extortionate holders of monopolies during the early seventeenth century, and may be delineated in Massinger's Sir Giles Overeach.) The suggestion that the visitation of the poltergeist is connected with the avarice of the house's owner is hinted at in the lines:

The mocking money in the pockets
Then turned black . . .

Touches like this make the poem more than the brilliant exercise in the macabre which it incidentally is.

I have stressed these elements in Miss Sitwell's earlier poems, because they prepare us, to some extent, for her later development. Nevertheless, *Street Songs*, which appeared more than a decade after her *Collected Poems*, show a maturity and freedom of style and feeling that make them seem like the work of another writer. The *Poet's Notebook*, which was published not very long afterwards, showed how, in her reading, though still retaining her love for the romantic and the fantastic, especially as shown in the work of the seventeenth century English poets and the French Symbolists, she had been drawn increasingly to the great nature-mystics and poet-seers, such as Wordsworth and Whitman, and to that earlier poetry, rich in an intellectual symbolism, of the Middle Ages—Chaucer, Dunbar, Skelton and Villon. Miss Sitwell herself has stated that *Street Songs* sprang from the same impulse as *Gold Coast Customs*—meaning, I suppose, the social disease of our time, culminating in the War, with which several poems in *Street Songs* directly deal. But the latter go far deeper than the earlier poem, and show evidence, I cannot help thinking, not only of a heightened apprehension of universal suffering, but of a personal crisis confronted and finally overcome. 'An Old Woman,' which I have already quoted, seems to mark that victory, and looks forward to the great, triumphant songs of resignation in *Green Song*.

These latter poems have a depth and spaciousness which tempts us to compare them with Eliot's *Four Quartets*, though they are, of course, very different. Eliot, with a strongly masculine intellect, and as a Christian and a fundamentally classical writer, accepts the difference which separates a transcendent God from His creation, the gulf which lies between Deity and the human soul. This communicates to his poetry its ascetic bareness, its sense of darkness and strain, and gives the greater nobility to its final and hardly-won triumph. Edith Sitwell, if I read her aright, is, more intuitive and feminine, a pantheist. There is something of Whitman in the loose rhythms of her long lines, though her long self-imposed musical discipline, and her aristocratic feeling for words, save her from ever losing sight of the fundamentals of form, as he does. These poems do not seek to impose a harmony, but to express the whole rhythm of life, even accepting the conflict out of which they themselves have arisen. Some hint of that conflict is given, I think, in the beau-

tiful and terrible poem, 'Green flows the River of Lethe-O'. But the horror is seen only retrospectively:

I thought that the way of the Blood would never tire
But now only the red clover
Lies over the breath of the lion and the mouth of the lover

And green flows Lethe river-O
Long Lethe river
Over Gomorrah's city and the fire . . .

Again, in 'Heart and Mind' the sense of conflict is present, but here it is accepted as a tragic theme running through the whole of universal life:

never till time is done
Will the fire of the heart and the fire of the mind be one.

Perhaps the most remarkable of these poems is 'Holiday', whose theme is the universal redemption of the world, and the annihilation of Good and Evil. The resolution of the discord struck in *Gold Coast Customs* seems to be suggested:

On this great holiday
Dives and Lazarus are brothers again:
They seem as gold as they come up from the city
Casting aside the grave-clothes of their lives
Where ragged dust is nobly born as the Sun.

In the lines which immediately follow these—

Now Atlas lays aside his dying world,
And the clerk the papers in the dusty office;

we have a combination of the universal mythical symbol with the particular mundane event, and the perception of the hitherto unperceived relation between them, which constitute one of the prime marks of poetry. Miss Sitwell in her way, as other poets in theirs, has achieved at times a sort of poetic absolute, and through holding fast to her own individual integrity, has come near to annihilating self, to become the vehicle of this universal poetry of life.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

REVIEWS

EDWIN MUIR, *The Voyages and Other Poems* (Faber & Faber, 6s.).

After the appearance of *The Narrow Place* one was bound to look forward with eagerness to Edwin Muir's next collection of poems. It is one of three outstanding literary events in the first half of this year. Muir's *Voyage* together with Dylan Thomas's *Deaths and Entrances* and Roy Campbell's *Talking Broncho* have set a measure to the quality of contemporary verse that will at last satisfy the more discriminating reader and bring relief from the long lists of Ersatzproductions that fill bookshops and minds with great boredom and unhealthy air. Of the three poets I have mentioned Muir is perhaps the least original because the most cosmopolitan. His poetry absorbs many influences with the deliberate and selective competence of a scholarly man. Muir uses his learning and poetic talent with extraordinary skill and presents us with the nearest to a modern Humanist poet one can think of. Though one is aware that he would profit as a poet if he cared less for influences, or if he were less content with using his poetic gifts as means of expression of an otherwise very gallant humanist philosophy. On the other hand, his writing would lack much of its present charm and perfection, and the rare combination of his personality would most regrettably be divided and diminished. That is to say that whereas he would gain as a poet his poetry would suffer and become individualistic and regional. It would cease to be the 'towering window' through which the poet regards the world. An old wind blows in these leaves and makes the lines wonderfully alive. His aliveness is most remarkable in his refusal—so typical of the man of the renaissance—of ready-made and parcelled-up existences.

> '*Into the grave, into the grave with him.*
> *Quick, quick, with dust and stones this dead man cover*
> *Who living was a flickering soul so dim*
> *He was never truly loved nor truly a lover.*'

In another poem he calls himself and man with angry pride 'a dustman damned', and later in the same poem he says: 'So I may yet recover by this bad/Research that good I scarcely dreamt I had'.

If we only had the grace to make the light that is in us shine and give warmth we could overcome evil and fear. When we realize ourselves we overcome death in life and enter the sphere where judgment can be said and the values tested. We must leave the

shadow existence already here and in the present and become fit for life. Again and again the virtues and graces of a fearless attitude towards life and death are praised and realized in Muir's poems. Their mature competence lies in such qualities as taste, judgment and fearlessness, all these cardinal virtues of the true Humanist. How else could this

'little wicked wicket gate'

charm us so much even though we know that it is the opening through which the enemy invades us and man's cause and citadel is lost? It is because when a man looks quietly at the world for a long time as though through a towering window and sorrows have tested his soul he will come to regard the gate through which defeat and death enters, with the one wisdom that is unconquerable, which is not mortal—for there is no absolute defence for mortal man. In so far as he will not make use of unworthy means to prolong the existence of his body or opinion, nor prolong a legitimate struggle by artificial devices, a Humanist is the negation of what has become popularly known as a partisan. As such the Humanist also has become the rarest species of our time. In a world of endlessly outworn fancy and self-deception the realism of such lines will be refreshing:

'right and left I find
Sorrow, sorrow,
And cannot be resigned,
Knowing that we were made
By joy to drive joy's trade
And not to waver to and fro,
But quickly go.'

This should be re-read at times by people who prefer to abandon themselves and ultimately each other for the sake of the coloured blanket in front of their eyes.

FRED MARNAU

RONALD DUNCAN, *This Way to the Tomb.*

This Way to the Tomb is the most interesting verse play written in English since *Murder in the Cathedral.* Mr. Ronald Duncan is influenced by Eliot's play in the whole conception of the theme, which is the death and resurrection of a foredoomed ascetic saint who has renounced life. His satire has also the qualities and defects of Eliot's satiric approach. Its

merit is the confidence and also the respect-worthy devoutness and decency of his own position. Its weakness is that Mr. Duncan's rejection of modern life is so complete that he has ceased, really, to be interested in it. The second part of his play, the anti-Masque, pictures a modern existence which has no value except nuisance-value. It is simply a cloud of humming gnats obstructing our view of the past. The result is that his picture has not the solidity of satire. It has only the shadowiness of caricature.

Dramatically, *This Way to the Tomb* is far from satisfying. There is no conflict between the characters, and the anti-Masque played in modern times fails to 'connect' with the masque played in the fourteenth century. Yet it remains a singularly impressive piece of work of a seriousness far removed from portentous solemnity and full of exquisite passages of writing.

The impressiveness of Mr. Duncan is due to the fact not just that he is sincere, but that he is able to use his sincerity creatively. He never strives after originality. To create an effect he borrows certain devices from Eliot, such as the repetition of a single word at the end of a line:

> '*Joy is forgetting the knowledge,*
> *Hope is ignoring the knowledge,*
> *Love is in spite of the knowledge;*'

or he uses a succession of assonances such as 'charity', 'heresy', 'poetry', or 'confusion', 'cushion', 'meditation'.

With any other writer these devices might become facile, but with Mr. Duncan we are in the presence of a writer who uses any means at hand to say something which he really wants to say. The result is that he transforms everything and uses it to his own purpose, which is an earnestness of meaning really commanding our attention, and even attaining new artistic effects.

Duncan adds to Eliot's manner the solidity of observation of a countryman who has laboured with the soil. He begins a passage with a line which is purely Eliot's:

> '*The blind mouth of the earth sucks a dry udder,*

but a few lines later he reinforces the speech with passages of observation which are entirely his own:

> '*Once it was spring. The almond broke*
> *Out with a mad enthusiasm from its tight bark.*

What he adds to Eliot's method is a joy in nature for its own sake, where in Eliot observation is nearly always toned down so as not to interrupt the flow of moral preoccupation. With Duncan,

nature breaks in and asserts its own joyousness, so that he adds to Eliot something of the qualities of D. H. Lawrence.

Amongst the most beautiful things in *This Way to the Tomb* are the songs which have a grace and spontaneity equally absent from the 'intellectual' school of modern poets and from the 'neo-romantics .

'*Morning is only*
a scarlet stallion
Jumping the ocean.
Its mane aflame on the sky.

Morning is only
The white plumes of smoke
As the velvet snake
Might leave the green valley.

In this masque and anti-masque Ronald Duncan has written a remarkable sermon. Like the best Christian teaching of to-day, it speaks with the voice of our own hearts when it speaks of the past and of the inner faith of the preacher. Also like them, it strikes a chill at the heart when it speaks of the world in which we live, because the preacher, having arrived at the stage of realizing the importance of individual salvation, is confronted by his inability to realize salvation within the context of our modern world.

Obviously, though, Ronald Duncan has found himself in this play. The question is whether he can get beyond himself having done so: whether he can create characters which are not the simple dramatization of individual desire for salvation, surrounded by a chorus of more or less frustrating shadows. Whether he can present complete objectivity, trusting himself to create both sides with equal solidity. Whether he can enter into the complexity of conflicts as they are actually fought out in this world where issues are rarely coloured in simple opposites of black and white. Whether he can portray a world in which the Spirit is not confined to the past or to the future, or to one side rather than another, but in which it is struggling to realize itself on all sides, at all times, in all places and in all humanity.

We need dramatic poets who, having decided for themselves what side they are on, then deliberately cease to take sides: dramatists who are passionately interested in life however bizarre or shabby the form in which it presents itself. The great promise of Mr. Duncan lies in his love of nature and in his appreciation of the enjoyment of life.

STEPHEN SPENDER

THE FIRST NOTABLE COLONIAL POET

ROY CAMPBELL, *Talking Bronco* (Faber, 7s. 6d.).

The arguing is finished, the shouting has ended, while across the newly silent floor of the senate of the republic of Letters a nervous back-bencher advances, from the extreme left, towards the rostrum, to carry these laurels across the barricades of the present to pay just tribute to the first colonial poet, whatever his politics, to reach independent stature. For Roy Campbell's zebras pulling the dawn across the sky cause the same question to be asked with equal intensity as William Blake's tiger has done for long generations now.

Roy Campbell, a South African, is unquestionably the first important poet from any country of the Commonwealth; his position is so unrivalled that acceptance of it is as common currency in Canada and Australia as it is in the Union itself. This fact alone will ensure for the author of *Adamastor* an enduring place in literature.

No adequate appraisal of his work could ignore the relationship between the lack of an indigenous culture and life in a colony. What has age got to do with this; South Africa and Canada have been new countries for over three hundred years now? Cape Town and Montreal are older than most of London and all of Birmingham and Liverpool. They were certainly founded in the same decades of that century which witnessed the beginnings of Boston, which has since become the capital of a world which counts Emerson and Thoreau and John Quincy Adams and Melville among its citizens. They are older than Chile, yet in Santiago a Nobel Prize winning poet pays taxes.

Yet for over three hundred years until now there has been no notable poet, with any serious likelihood of being so accepted, in these four countries, who with a population of over 20 millions have taken their place as serious opponents in modern war. There is no rule about these things, England had a Shakespeare when her population was only five million; while Canada doesn't possess even a serious minor poet, probably because she hasn't yet got 20 million. There is no obvious explanation for all this. It is tempting no doubt to say that South Africa, with Olive Schreiner, Roy Campbell, William Plomer and Anna Kavan has outstripped the other three because of her age (Vasco Da Gama rounded the Cape before Christopher Marlowe was born); because of the leisure of a society based on a slave economy, there are six negroes to each white person in the union; because also she has good wine and a mixture of

races—yet if all this were enough, the Old South would have outstripped New England.

Such is the nature of humanity that a real colonial poet, once he did appear, was bound to have a mixed reception in England. The snobbery of Bloomsbury makes Mayfair seem like a Klondyke mining camp.

After a major poet, after Yeats and Eliot, Campbell plays as important a rôle in contemporary literature as any other, and a much deeper and more permanent one than some of those fashionable frequenters of literary conclaves where vows are taken not to mention his name in print. Some of his poems and some of his translations, like the 'Zulu Girl' and 'The Sisters', and his translation in the present volume of part of 'The Dark Night of the Soul', by Saint John of the Cross, are of such real heat that no praise can increase, nor ignoring cool. One of his images, 'The zebras pulling the dawn across the sky', is as much a part of the spiritual furniture of our generation as the blue mountains of Cézanne or the golden wheat tops of van Gogh. It is photographed on to our minds as is the memory of the swans crossing the lakes at Coole.

Any colonial who even really wants to be a real poet, and pays his desire the courtesy of long years of endeavour, is in a position somewhat similar to that of the Jews. His Mount Parnassus, as their Mount Zion, is surrounded by territory of which he is not a citizen. Because he is a poet he is a foreigner at home—because he is a colonial he is a foreigner in the country, to which the culture, of which he belongs, is a part. Roy Campbell's muse may sing in English but it listens to things being talked of, in French and in Zulu, in Spanish and in Afrikaans.

No statement on Campbell, no review of any of his poems, could possibly be complete without some mention of his politics. To many inhabitants of this age of slogans he is 'the one who fought for Franco', whereas what he was really doing was, to defend a dream. A colony is an unnatural form of society. A Declaration of Independence is invariably the first work of art to be produced by such a community, not always, but invariably.

Campbell is unique because he is the first colonial poet and perhaps because of this he is the last poet of a pre-colonial owning Europe. He is a crusader—he belongs to hot things, to the Host and the sun, to christendom rather than to Europe—to Avila, not to Field Street. The dome of Carmel means more to him than the spires of Oxford. He wears his catholicism (although he happens to be a convert) as naturally as St. John of the Cross wore his habit—to him the industrial revolution and the reformation are

hard-to-believe far-away foreign tales. To Roy Campbell a bull fight is easier to visualize than a committee meeting.

During the Spanish Civil War there were idealists on both sides—on Franco's, the Carlists; on that of the Republics, the Anarchists (both equally 'old fashioned' and 'out-dated'). Roy Campbell fought with both—with the Anarchists as well as with the Carlists. This fact, I believe, has never before been mentioned in print in this country.

Roy Campbell is no more a fascist than he is a Zulu (incidentally, unlike so many South Africans, he has no colour prejudices whatever). He is not a fascist principal because he does not belong to the twentieth century and Fascism as yet belongs to no other. Incidentally, the real reason for his unpopularity with the literary high brows of the left is not because he fought for Franco, but because he works with his hands. For like most colonials he has retained certain human simplicities and courtesies which in Europe are, in our generation for the most part, only still found among working people.

Campbell spends too much time fighting the middle brows, that is why this book does not contain such pure poetry as did *The Flaming Terrapin*, why it resembles *The Flowering Rifle* more than it does *Adamastor*.

Why does he continually attack the nasty things in the camp of his enemies? Surely he must know that the Right too, the Church and the Monarchy is crowded out with careerists and middle brows and yes-men. The Left has no copyright on human venalness. Surely such a true poet as Roy Campbell must realize that the function of the creative type is to fight the static things inside his own idealogy. We of the socialist Left were not the first in history to fall far short of the ideals we created, and if we have gotten a dozen Arnold Rattenburys we have also produced at least one Ignazio Silone, and that equation, Campbell would be the first to agree, brings the scales down heavily on the credit side.

However Campbell has written his poems, he has fought his fight, from Durban, through London and Provence, to Avila, and because of them both, his name and his work will hold a similar place in the history of colonial literature as Table Mountain, the St. Lawrence, and Niagara Falls do in the geography of those countries.

PAUL POTTS

A THING IN COMMON

GEOFFREY GRIGSON, *The Isles of Scilly* (Routledge, 5s.).

It is very difficult for me to review these poems. Geoffrey Grigson is one of my friends for whom my admiration has increased during the years I have known him, and in the reality of whose intellectual honesty my faith has never wavered. This is something in these days when

> '*Intellectual disgrace*
> *Stares from every human face.*

But that is not all. When I read his poem *To You*, which lists and admires

> '*Men above men, greater and less*
> *But yet above, through whom life lived, and looks*
> *For once on unbelieving men—*
> *Fragments of life, on whom life laid her grace*
> *And heaviness*',

and then I look around my own shelves; yes, I see that most of them are there. But that is not all. I pick up his *Wild Flowers in Britain* and, opening it at random, read, 'White dead nettle, which is held to be native in woods and forests from Spain and Morocco to Siberia and the Himalayas, is another weed which has gone about with men. It likes the constantly renewed soil thrown up from a ditch, and it probably settled in England as a colonist. A good thing too, because its beaked regular flowers and neat, strong habit make it a weed to look at and like, and pick, and put in one's house. It is worth turning a dead nettle upside down to admire the remarkable pattern made by the four yellow and black anthers against the pure white of the flower's hood.' Although I am not a botanist, I too realize that 'the world of plants' is not 'a dry, brown herbarium'. I grow the Common Centaury, with its mass of tiny pink stars which close in the evening, and Crow Garlic, tall and slender spikes with ball heads of purplish flowers mixed with tiny cloves, in my garden. How to review the book of a man whom one admires and with whom one shares so many interests is a problem. It is not easy at any time to review a friend's book, for one is afraid to praise too much in case the spiteful say that one is puffing for friendship's sake, but how much more difficult when the situation is like this. I can but try and be as honest as possible.

In reading *The Isles of Scilly*, I also re-read *Several Observations* and *Under the Cliff*. I have seen it stated that Geoffrey Grigson is a

poet who works on a small scale, that his descriptions are as careful as the painting of the Thistle in seed in *The Stonebreaker* by John Brett, but that they achieve little more than accuracy of observation. This is sheer rubbish—someone once thought of the idea (helped no doubt by the title of Mr. Grigson's first book), and the lazy have accepted it as a convenient pigeon-hole. The neat tag sticks like the seed-head of a burr, and it is time it was brushed off. To-day, when so much parboiled cow's heel is passed off as verse, and when the spores of *amanita phalloides* have made their way into the pure culture beds, the honesty, the depth of feeling and the variety of the poems in *The Isles of Scilly* stand out as clearly as the first Early Purple Orchis in a wood in spring. Take, for instance, 'On Reading W. H. Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror" ':

'Although we beat the bushes on the Cyprian track,
Jump forward with our green, long-handled net,
And catch the insect we've been after
In the deserted islands, yet
Inside our killing bottle, all the idiot mind
Finds folded on the gauze
Is still the iridescence of the undefined.

One way we most of us get near,
Then we repeat that way;
And still eluded by the thing we do not find,
Are slowly frozen in the white-haired wintry day.
Even the great magicians feel the cold
Who take twelve ways to one; they too, and you,
Must snap their wands, and dribble and grow old.'

And,

'Throat column I shall not see tighten again,
Shoulders I shall not watch sloping under your frock,
Hardy or Hafiz you could have stroked with pain
Cool like a clear colonnade, calm girl who shone
Clearer than air in the rain.'

Take the poems in *The Isles of Scilly* and forget the tidy labellers.

Certainly, the acuteness of observation is there. It is one of the outstanding virtues of Geoffrey Grigson as a poet that he can re-create the image of the object which he observes in a new and illuminating way. How often this happens can be seen from the following, the italics are mine, 'the tart *prinks* by', '*Speckled* by the *solid* chestnut candles', 'their *autumn-coloured* beer', and 'The curlew *curves* and *whimpers* to the ground'. These are not carefully selected —this *essential* rightness of the descriptive word occurs in every

poem and in almost every line. Mr. Grigson undoubtedly possesses the 'Poet's Eye', but, and from the point of view of communication this is as important, he also has the 'Poet's Tongue'.

The Isles of Scilly contain what are, in my opinion, some of the best poems he has written, and reading it with his two earlier books, we should realize that we are in the presence of a poet whose personality is his own. In these times this is a valuable asset, and a rare one. The true Oxlip, which grows in my part of the country, can only be confused with the False Oxlip (a cross between a Primrose and a Cowslip) at the first glance. Mr. Grigson's poems deserve closer scrutiny than they have received. It is time that some of the clichéd bilge with which they seem to be reviewed was drained from the inkwells and that they were refilled. There is so much spurious change in the pockets of the poetry world that a genuine coin has become rare and some people are so confused that they really refuse to accept it at its face-value when they find it. Read these poems carefully, without preconceptions and prejudices, and I think you will find that their face-value is pretty high.

This has been an entirely personal review. I have tried to be honest, and I may have succeeded in being over-earnest. Maybe I should not have undertaken to review the book. I can only say that I think that those who do not read these poems are missing an experience which is not only valuable, but also exciting and pleasant.

RUTHVEN TODD

STOWERS JOHNSON, *London Saga* (Fortune Press, 9s. 6d.); VIVIAN LOCKE ELLIS, *Collected Lyrical Poems* (Faber, 7s. 6d); HARDIMAN SCOTT, *Adam and Eve and Us* (Sylvan Press, 8s. 6d.); ROBINSON JEFFERS, *Medea, freely adapted from the Medea of Euripides* (Random House, $2.50); SYDNEY D. TREMAYNE, *For Whom there is no Spring* (Pendulum Publications, 1s.); ANTHONY RICHARDSON, *Full Cycle* (Hodder & Stoughton, 3s. 6d.); S. MATTHEWMAN, *Gabriel's Hounds* (Books of To-day, 3s. 6d.); THOMAS GOOD, *Overture* (Counterpoint, Alden Press, Oxford); C. W. BRODRIBB, *Poems* (Macmillan, 6s.); IAN CRITCHETT, *The Spider's Web.*

An ode to Westminster is included in Thomas Good's collection of poems, and it is interesting to note what a very different London it is from that of Stowers Johnson. Both are true aspects of the city, but truth assumes an infinite variety through the angle of vision and state of mind of the recorder. Thomas Good, for example, sees:

'Once again in the park, consider the lilies,
The blackcoat's rebate, the typist's small trauma,
The pregnant sweetheart on the kerbstone of victory,
Muffle the cadenza of grief from the script of memory.

That is one view, expressed in the terse, bitter imagery of a particular poet. Now consider Stowers Johnson in a similar London park:

"Twas lilac time and in this London, June.
There was no sign of summer ending soon.
Only the brown bird from the Southlands sang,
Our suburb gardens to his music rang
So strange and thrill, for never yet had he
Besought our town a citizen to be,
But now, bombed out of Europe, he has found
In these deserted gardens peace profound.'

That is the view of the poet who finds beauty and meaning in the things which surround him and does not seek the beauty and ugliness existing in the lives of the people who walk there.

Vivian Locke Ellis's poem, 'Sunrise on London', was written before the war—the same London but yet another viewpoint:

'When the sun rises as he rose this morning
In a violet sky,
At the end of the dark seat, with its changing face adorning
Those blackened roofs, we stared into his eye.'

Anthony Richardson is not concerned with the people, the parks, or the sunrise, for him the agony and destruction of London is epitomized in Red Lion Square:

'Here is the place!—torn walls, a spire foreshortened,
Dark caverns of foundations, now revealed
Beyond our utmost dreamings, one time . . . one time!
And there was a room nearby, for love ensealed—
So we considered! If I spake you true
I should say: "And others besides you, too"!'

The Underground, that vacuum which sucks in and vomits its daily millions has a fascination for poets, including Sydney Tremayne:

'Slack postured, sag mouthed girls,
Industrial dullness on their city faces,
Short-stepping clerks, prim-pallid, clockwork stupid—

Wound to go round and round in their own traces—
Flow to the Underground and take their places.

Although not a Londoner born, C. W. Brodribb is perhaps the truest Londoner of all—having been for many years assistant editor of *The Times*. He proclaims:

'I am old London with my waste of weeds
After five years of warfare, stone from stone
Disrupted of my seat, through which the seeds
Of wild plants into crowding life have grown.

In *London Saga* Stowers Johnson takes the period between the Coronation of 1937 and the end of the war. It is an imposing epic of 5,600 lines which sometimes rolls and thunders with a classic magnificence and often reaches a simple and sensitive feeling. While I cannot endorse entirely his somewhat over-simplified view of history, I recommend Johnson's book as a fine achievement.

The collected lyrical poems of Vivian Locke Ellis possess a purity of vision and often remind one of Chinese lyrics, of Elizabethan lyrics, and sometimes, with poems like 'And yet Another Song' and 'Words Without Music', of the peculiarly penetrating simplicity found in Edward Thomas's poetry.

Anthony Richardson belongs to a younger generation and often writes with the cynicism which was produced in those who served for five years in the R.A.F. or other branches of the Armed Forces. 'Saloon Bar: April 1945', for example, begins:

'My dear good sir, your attitude's splendid,
Your business, too, is really doing fine?
You say you've read the news? Berlin's encircled?
By Jove, it must be smashing in the line!'

His cynicism is not very deep. He probably suffered a great deal during the war, and it was possibly increased by his turning to poetry in order to reinforce his Christian faith. I think that his poetry justifies the suffering.

The between-wars industrial wasteland and the new post-bombing deserts comprise Sydney Tremayne's landscape and his poems have the bleakness of dockland streets during a strike. Although one such as 'Refugees' has a certain drive the majority are typical of the nineteen-thirties.

I can find little justification for translating English poetry into Latin other than as an exercise for the translator. Brodribb's translations include Keat's 'Thou wast not Born for Death', Herbert Asquith's 'Youth in the Skies', and a poem entitled 'Come where

MR. AGATE REPLIES

Peter Baker has received a communication from Mr. Agate concerning his review of Mr. Agate's book *A Shorter Ego* in the Spring number of POETRY QUARTERLY. We think it only fair to Mr. Agate to print his reply. EDITOR.

April 24th, 1946.

SIR,

You write that Shakespeare trumpeted and roared. To which category would you assign 'Full fathom five' and 'When that I was and a little tiny boy'? You invite me to forget about horses and actors and read Austen (*sic*) and Spender and Comfort and Dyment and Treece. I am to try to comprehend the 'new assonances, word-music and thought-patterns'. But I have read and I do comprehend, and I just don't like. If a poet has no word-music his thought must interest me; if it doesn't, I care nothing for the thought-pattern. You tell me to note how, even when to-day's poets have failed, they have 'opened new roads of technical development'. As well ask me to approve the bouquet and body of a wine because somebody has found a way of making claret out of old gum-boots!

Yours faithfully,

JAMES AGATE.

MANDRAKE

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